

Forging New Relationships: The Foundational Document on Aboriginal Initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan

October, 2003

Executive Summary

There is a dramatic University-wide consensus that the University of Saskatchewan needs to build on existing activities and forge new relationships with Aboriginal students, peoples, communities, educational institutions, and organizations.¹ Ensuring that Aboriginal and indigenous students and faculty members are welcome at this University, in all of its colleges and programs, is a central commitment. Equally important, the University of Saskatchewan is seeking ways of enhancing its intellectual partnerships with Aboriginal peoples and is looking for structures that ensure integrity, fairness, and accessibility in the inclusion of indigenous knowledge and cultural expression within the institution. The University of Saskatchewan is also reaching out to the Aboriginal communities to identify shared problems, to seek solutions to those problems in a relationship built on mutual trust and cooperation.



The University community has acknowledged that there is a great deal of work to do in improving on an established track record of success in serving Aboriginal students and peoples. It is also clear that not all of this can be accomplished at a single stroke. *A Framework for Planning at the University of Saskatchewan* identified, as one of four priority goals, responding to the needs of Aboriginal peoples. “At the University of Saskatchewan, we must dedicate ourselves to making available to all Aboriginal peoples the full range of our programs, and we

¹ Readers are referred to Appendix One, The Current State Analysis, for definitions of various terms used in *Forging New Relationships*.

must adopt strategies that will improve their ability to succeed.” (page 7). Over the course of the first year of his presidency, President MacKinnon asked Professor Ernie Walker, Department of Archaeology, to undertake discussions with the Aboriginal community on their perceptions of the University and possibilities for future collaboration. This resulted in the development of the *Conceptual Framework for Aboriginal Initiatives* (described below) by the Provost’s Office. At the same time, the chairs of Council committees encouraged the President to establish a coordinating body for overseeing Aboriginal initiatives on campus.

The *Conceptual Framework for Aboriginal Initiatives* initiated an excellent discussion of options and opportunities; as a framework, it identified a series of distinct areas for development representing a concerted effort on the part of the whole University to address the Aboriginal opportunities of the 21st century. In that document, the Provost’s Office articulated the University’s general commitment to Aboriginal students, faculty, and communities and identified the manner in which Aboriginal programs and initiatives might be undertaken. Based on the many extensive discussions which have arisen after the presentation of the *Conceptual Framework*, it is clear that the range of opportunities and imperatives is quite substantial. In particular, University Council passed a series of resolutions in May 2002 affirming its commitment to moving quickly and purposefully on the provision of additional support services for Aboriginal students.

Forging New Relationships is intended to signal to the University community (primarily to the colleges, departments, and major administrative units) institutional priorities and commitments related to Aboriginal initiatives on campus. **Over the next five years, the University of Saskatchewan aims to become the pre-eminent Canadian university in all aspects of Aboriginal education.** Given the broad array of educational and professional programs currently provided, the University of Saskatchewan is uniquely positioned to make this assertion, particularly in the areas of academic and research programs. However, in some of the other areas, such as cultural programs and community outreach, the University will need to build on existing partnerships and develop additional cooperative and collaborative relationships with other partners in the delivery of post-secondary educational program offerings. Finally, Aboriginal students should expect to experience a ‘seamless’ transition from high school to post-secondary education, and within that sector, to the University of Saskatchewan, which represents one of several educational choices for these promising and multi-talented young adults.

Building on a strong track record of past performance, *Forging New Relationships* identifies five areas of development and opportunity where the University of Saskatchewan will build on its existing strengths and where the University needs to make substantial commitments to initiatives designed to address pressing needs. These areas are:

- ***Student Affairs*** (recruitment, preparation and transition programs, support and advising programs). The University aims to be the national leader in innovative programs and services designed to recruit and retain Aboriginal students.
- ***Academic Programs*** (undergraduate and graduate). The University aims to distinguish its degree and certificate programs by their breadth and by the inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge in the curriculum.
- ***Research Programs*** (related to research with and for Aboriginal peoples and communities). The University aims to be a national centre of excellence in research directly related to Aboriginal peoples.

- **Cultural Programs** (including Aboriginal student spaces on campus). The University aims to have faculty, students, and staff be sensitive to and knowledgeable about the history and culture of Aboriginal peoples and to provide opportunities to understand and celebrate Aboriginal language and culture both on campus and in the Aboriginal community.
- **Community Outreach** (including institutional presence, accessibility to Aboriginal communities, and provincial approach to Aboriginal education opportunities and growth). The University aims to be more visible, engaged, and knowledgeable about community issues and to participate in locally-based research projects that are immediately relevant to Aboriginal communities.

This Foundational Document outlines a series of strategies supporting each of the major areas described above. Some of these strategies, specifically those related to the student affairs dimension, arise from extensive discussions with members of the University community and represent a consensus about how the University could achieve its goal of being the pre-eminent University in Canada in Aboriginal education. Other strategies are provided based on our estimate of our current performance and what might be possible to achieve in the foreseeable future. It is anticipated that the Integrated Planning Process will produce distinct initiatives within the colleges and within the University's broad goal of increasing its profile as the national leader in Aboriginal education. Individual faculty and staff will continue to be a driving force, -- many existing programs and initiatives are building on decades of solid achievement. *Forging New Relationships* will now connect these individual efforts toward a coordinated University response aimed at moving the whole University forward in its response to Aboriginal peoples.

This Foundational Document is accompanied by two appendices. Appendix One, the 'Current State Analysis', provides an overview of Aboriginal initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan in 2001-02 and gives us a basis on which to measure our progress over the planning cycle (2003/04 to 2006-07). Appendix Two, the 'Consultation Process', outlines the discussion and approval of this document and describes how it has evolved based on comments and feedback from meetings with individuals and groups, including two workshops (June 2002, March 2003) with participation from both on and off campus. These workshops assisted in the identification of priorities for development over the first planning cycle.

This Foundational Document concludes with a statement on next steps that are to follow its approval by Council. The development of a comprehensive implementation strategy will involve the identification of areas of synergy and priority between this and other Foundational Documents, and with the college plans arising from the Integrated Planning Initiative.

The Need for New Relationships

At the outset, it is vital that the definition of Aboriginal/indigenous peoples² be both broad and well-understood. The University must join in celebrating the cultural diversity of the Aboriginal peoples of Saskatchewan and Canada, and the indigenous peoples of the world. To this end, Aboriginal is defined as including the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and communities in Canada, and indigenous is defined as the Aboriginal peoples and communities of Canada and those of other nations. The University recognizes and celebrates this diversity and acknowledges that cultural differences must be taken into account when developing programs and specialized initiatives.

Over the past thirty years, the University of Saskatchewan has established a strong record for engagement with Aboriginal peoples within this province. While we continue to celebrate our collective accomplishments and partnerships, we recognize the need to forge new, and expanded, relationships and to commit to serious and sustained dialogue with Aboriginal peoples, groups, organizations, and institutions. In particular, the University has indicated a willingness to offer new programs and to take new approaches in its relations with Aboriginal peoples and communities. New relationships must be forged on an intellectual partnership based on mutual respect and openness to the richness of Aboriginal culture and knowledge. There must be, as well, a commitment to cultural understanding and to working with Aboriginal and indigenous communities to develop programs and support services which promote Aboriginal and indigenous student academic success.

1. ***Intellectual Partners – Working with Aboriginal Peoples and Indigenous Knowledge.*** The University is looking for opportunities to work cooperatively with Aboriginal and indigenous peoples and communities on the presentation and integration of indigenous knowledge into the University's intellectual life. Some of this currently happens in individual classes. Programs such as those operated through the Native Law Centre, and the Department of Native Studies are well established; others, such as the Indigenous Peoples and Justice Initiative are new and still developing. All have endeavoured to expand indigenous knowledge into the University's intellectual life.
2. ***Partners in Opportunity – Opening the Whole University to Aboriginal Students.*** The University is concerned to ensure that Aboriginal and indigenous students are able to follow their interests, career plans, and dreams regardless of where they lead on campus. At present, Aboriginal and indigenous students are underrepresented in many academic programs. Significant barriers continue to exist, thus limiting Aboriginal and indigenous participation across the University.
3. ***Partners in Solving Shared Problems – Research and Community Outreach.*** Individual faculty members have, with respect and diligence, established productive and mutually beneficial research relationships with Aboriginal and indigenous communities and groups. Much more remains to be done. Aboriginal and indigenous research needs have to be matched, where appropriate and feasible, with institutional research capacity, thus creating important opportunities for cooperation.
4. ***Partners in Saskatchewan's Future – Importance of Education to Aboriginal People and Communities in Saskatchewan.*** There is a growing awareness of the fact that the

² Readers are referred to Appendix One, the Current State Analysis, for definitions of terms used in *Forging New Relationships*.

economic and social success of Aboriginal peoples will play a crucial role in determining Saskatchewan's future. While the University will maintain an appropriate level of concern about the academic preparedness and progress of individual students, there is an urgent need to address the broader, province-wide imperatives to expand post-secondary opportunities for Aboriginal students.

5. ***Post-Secondary Partners – Establishing a Collaborative Framework with the University of Regina, Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology (SIAT), Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC),³ Gabriel Dumont College, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT), Regional Colleges, Wanuskewin, and Other Educational Institutions.*** The needs and aspirations of Aboriginal students are much greater than can be addressed through the University of Saskatchewan. The University has made a series of clear commitments to work cooperatively with other organizations in a collective effort to improve educational opportunities, professional services, and research programs for Aboriginal peoples and communities in Saskatchewan. While the autonomy of the University of Saskatchewan will be preserved, the institution commits itself to forging partnerships and other collaborative arrangements so as to best meet the needs of Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan.

6. ***Building on a Legacy: Recognition of Existing Activities.*** In establishing new directions and a broader range of commitments for the institution, the University of Saskatchewan is building on a solid record of accomplishments in the field of Aboriginal education. The University of Saskatchewan has long been a leader in the development of innovative, internationally-significant, programs for and with Aboriginal peoples and organizations. That the University has reached the point where it can consider a major expansion of activities is due in large measure to the relationships, pattern of cultural respect, and cooperative initiatives undertaken by units within the University in the recent past.

I. Student Affairs

In the *Conceptual Framework for Aboriginal Initiatives*, the University stated as its aim *to be the national leader in innovative programs and services designed to recruit and retain Aboriginal students to the University*. The participants in two of three Workshops (June 2002 and March 2003) on Aboriginal issues sponsored by the Provost's Office confirmed this area as the most important area for immediate development. The attraction and retention of Aboriginal and indigenous students in the University's programs and activities must take the first priority as the University moves through this first planning cycle.

Aboriginal Students at the University of Saskatchewan: According to institutional estimates, close to 1,300 **self-identified** Aboriginal students are registered at the University.⁴ These students have tended to cluster in three colleges (Arts and Science, Education, and Law) and more recently in a fourth college, Nursing, despite efforts by other colleges to encourage

³ SIFC has signalled its intention to become the First Nations University of Canada in 2003.

⁴ Information from college offices and college staff reveal some discrepancies in the data. These relate primarily to the specific knowledge student advisors may have about specific Aboriginal students who may be more willing to indicate to college officials their status but who may not wish to report this information on their registration form, particularly if specific benefits of reporting this information are unknown. Although more Aboriginal students may be studying on campus this Foundational Document will use the "self-identified" number as the official number for purposes of assessing progress.

greater Aboriginal participation. Furthermore (as will be documented in Appendix One), retention rates among Aboriginal students fall well below those for other students in University programs. This is particularly true in programs with a high science or mathematics component. In addition, a large majority of the Aboriginal students on campus are female (this is particularly true of First Nations students). A significant number of these women come to the University with substantial family obligations for whom housing, daycare, and sustained financial support are critical issues. Internal studies have indicated the need to provide adequate financial assistance, academic and personal support, and appropriate cultural and spiritual encouragement. It is imperative that the University pay close attention to the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal students and work with them and their communities to prepare them for the challenges of post-secondary education.

1. ***Aboriginal Students within the University Community.*** Considerable anecdotal evidence indicates that the University is not always a welcoming place for Aboriginal students. The institution is often experienced, by many students but particularly by new Aboriginal students, as aloof, unfriendly, and extremely complex. More work needs to be done on understanding the experience and expectations of first-year Aboriginal students and to ensuring that the campus provides a culturally-safe and respectful environment. The University, through the Student and Enrolment Services Division, needs to identify expectations and develop programs to ensure that first-year Aboriginal students are supported through their transition to the University.
2. ***Ensuring Equity and Equality of Opportunity on Campus.*** The University needs to make sure that qualified Aboriginal students are fully aware of and have access to the broad array of the program options on campus. Steps need to be taken to identify and address barriers that have restricted Aboriginal participation, particularly for those Aboriginal students who have the required qualifications for entry to programs but who may not be aware of the broad range of alternatives present on campus.
3. ***Undergraduate Education/Degree Completion:*** The University needs to recognize that Aboriginal students have experienced difficulties progressing through to the completion of their degrees. Pinpointing specific and systemic problems will enable the University to identify possible solutions to the challenges faced by Aboriginal students at the undergraduate level. Programs should provide an analysis of expectations for completion for Aboriginal students and make this available to students prior to their enrolment.
4. ***Aboriginal Student Participation Rates in Health Sciences, Sciences, Professional Programs, and Graduate Programs.*** There is persuasive evidence that, despite a strong interest in specific degrees and careers, Aboriginal students have had difficulty moving into and through certain programs. Degree programs with a strong mathematical or scientific base, in particular, have had difficulty attracting Aboriginal students. With the exception of Law, Education, and Nursing, Aboriginal students do not participate to any significant extent in the professional programs offered by the University. Aboriginal students are even less likely to participate in graduate education. The University must determine whether specific barriers exist and ensure that the broad range of program offerings is accessible to Aboriginal students. Specific initiatives will be required to address these challenges.
5. ***Working in Support of Aboriginal Students and Communities.*** The University offers a wide variety of initiatives in support of Aboriginal students. At present, the University does not have a consistent standard in this regard. The University needs to identify and review existing programs and encourage colleges and departments to implement

appropriate support initiatives designed to attract and retain Aboriginal students. Such efforts should be coordinated through the Special Advisor on Aboriginal Initiatives.

6. ***Support and Transition Programs.*** The University of Saskatchewan is host to several very successful transition programs, particularly in Commerce, Education, Nursing, and Law. There is not, as yet, an institution-wide support program for first-year students, although a pilot project is due to be launched for September 2003. The experience at other universities and colleges shows that such programs are critical to the educational success of Aboriginal students. A transition program has consistently been the top priority arising from the Workshops on Aboriginal Initiatives hosted in June 2002 and March 2003. This is the area in which the University must place the greatest initial emphasis.
7. ***Campus Support for Aboriginal Concerns and Issues.*** Through the Aboriginal Students Centre and the activities of specific departments, faculty, and staff members, Aboriginal students, individually and as groups, have been provided support. That support is not yet universally available or is not yet sufficient to meet identified or anticipated demand. If the University intends to expand its Aboriginal student population, the institution must be prepared to provide an appropriate level of support. The Student and Enrolment Services Division should play a coordinating role in ensuring that Aboriginal students are aware of the support that is currently available and should use their expertise to develop additional strategies to support Aboriginal students in a broad cross-section of academic programs.

Recruitment of Aboriginal Students: It is vital that the University of Saskatchewan ensure that Aboriginal students are aware of all of the educational opportunities in Saskatchewan. The University must ensure that Aboriginal students understand the requirements for academic success at the University level and that they are aware of the full range of academic and professional programs at this institution. Appropriate advising and sensitive recruiting initiatives are an essential element in the preparation of Aboriginal students for the University.

1. ***Recruitment Efforts Must Build on Retention/Support Strategies.*** The University must have support services in place first; recruitment efforts must be built upon a substantial and properly supported support system. It does not make sense to recruit Aboriginal students to the University if the support system is not in place to ensure that they can thrive in this new academic environment.
2. ***Recruitment Efforts Must Begin Before Completion of Grade Twelve.*** Recruitment cannot begin at the point of graduation from high school. There must also be extensive outreach programs to grade schools and to high schools throughout the province. The University must ensure a continuation of existing initiatives, like Super Saturday and specialized support programs, such as the Engineering and Science initiative for northern Saskatchewan.
3. ***Recruitment Efforts Must Build on Cooperative Partnerships with Post-Secondary Education Counselors.*** Band-based counselors and officials designated by the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan play a pivotal role in the encouragement and support of Aboriginal students. They must be familiar with University of Saskatchewan initiatives. More importantly, the University must seek their advice on how best to proceed with the recruitment and preparation of Aboriginal students.

4. **Recruitment Efforts Must Bring Students to the Campus.** On-campus visits and experiences should figure prominently in student recruitment and preparation programs. Where possible, potential students should be brought to campus for an orientation program.

Preparation and Transition Programs: It is essential that Aboriginal students are properly prepared for university studies (particularly in mathematics and the sciences, as basic courses in these areas are required for program entry or completion to many highly desired degrees) and that, once on campus, they are supported through the transition to campus life. A closely related concern is that the University avoid stereotyping Aboriginal students as all requiring remedial work and assistance. Many Aboriginal students adjust well, both academically and socially, to the campus environment; we need to ensure that this message is understood across the University. An appropriate and diverse array of preparation and transition programs should be developed.

1. **On Campus Preparatory Programs.** Pre-University initiatives, such as summer institutes in the sciences and professional programs, should be considered and, where deemed appropriate, established. These preparation programs are critical to the successful transition to University. They are particularly helpful in explaining academic and career options to interested students.
2. **Specialized Transition Programs.** The University has benefited significantly from specialized transition programs, such as the Program of Legal Studies for Aboriginal Students in the College of Law. These programs, and new programs, such as the first-year summer programs (as currently offered in the College of Arts and Science) should be continued and made available to a broader number of Aboriginal students.
3. **Aboriginal Student Orientation Program.** A separate Aboriginal students orientation should be established and should intersect with the regular first-year orientation program. This orientation should be compulsory and should provide an introduction to the challenges facing Aboriginal students and to the services available to those in need of help or advice. Students participating in the regular first-year orientation program should be exposed to Aboriginal cultural programs to foster greater understanding between students of all nationalities and backgrounds.
4. **University-Wide First-Year Transition Program.** A first-year transition program for Aboriginal students (currently under development, for offering in September 2003) must be established as a top priority and must be properly funded. This initiative should seek to provide Aboriginal students with the skills and courses necessary to secure access to a wide variety of non-direct entry programs and should focus heavily on critical first-year courses.
5. **Coordination of Elders Services.** Currently, several places on campus provide Elders services for students. Consideration should be given to coordinating these activities and to ensuring that all students have access to Elders support and guidance. Further, it is vital that provision of Elders services respect, where possible and appropriate, the cultural diversity of the Aboriginal population in Saskatchewan.
6. **Development of a Mentorship Program.** The mentorship program proposed by the Aboriginal Students Centre in Student and Enrolment Services should be tested and implemented on a permanent basis if the pilot program is successful. The idea of using

senior students to advise and mentor incoming students has a great deal of merit and reflects “best practice” in student retention theory.

7. **Financial Support for Aboriginal Students.** National mythology to the contrary, Aboriginal students do not all receive a high level of funding to attend university. It is important that the University expand its number of scholarships and bursaries with an emphasis on the latter. The University has identified scholarships and bursaries as a major priority within the current Capital Campaign. It is important to ensure that a significant percentage of the funds received are available for Aboriginal students. In addition, working with band post-secondary education counselors, the University must ensure that there is specialized financial advice available for Aboriginal students, including (but not restricted to) those receiving band funding. This advice should include the basics of budgeting but also should provide information on sources of assistance and support for exceptional circumstances.

Support and Advising: The University of Saskatchewan must ensure that Aboriginal students have access to the appropriate level and type of advising, including cultural support (Elders), academic and professional advising, and personal counseling. Recruiting students to the University is essential, but it is vital that the institution ensure that students are properly supported throughout their time on campus.

1. **Student Advising and Academic Counseling.** Dedicated student advisors, as appropriate, have to be available, particularly at the first-year level to provide the advice and support that some Aboriginal students need. While these advisors may be provided centrally or may be college-based, consideration should be given to the hiring of additional Aboriginal counselors in Student and Enrolment Services and in the colleges. Efforts should be made to coordinate their activities, where appropriate.
2. **Personal Counseling and Support Programs/Services for Aboriginal Students.** The University needs to address directly the experience of Aboriginal students on campus. While it is important that we undertake additional research to identify student needs and interests and, to the extent practicable, incorporate these findings into program and service offerings, we must make some initial steps in key areas. In particular, the University must consider giving top priority to:
 - The development of a mentorship program so that senior Aboriginal students can assist first-year students. A program is currently under development through the Aboriginal Students Centre.
 - A student daycare which recognizes the higher proportion of female Aboriginal students on campus and, more generally, the needs of women students.
 - The preparation of an Aboriginal Students Guide which details information on support services, faculty, community resources, cultural and social events, and other aspects of campus life.
 - The creation of a central website identifying all of the support services and activities available to Aboriginal and indigenous students on campus.

3. ***Aboriginal Student Life and Cultural Protocols.*** Consideration should be given to the establishment of culturally appropriate meeting opportunities for Aboriginal students (with opportunities for non-Aboriginal students to participate, where deemed suitable). This initiative, which may find inspiration in the talking circle, should focus on social, cultural, and economic challenges associated with the transition to University. The University must pay proper attention to protocol issues related to the support and advising of Aboriginal students, particularly when Elders are involved.
4. ***Cultural Awareness Programs for University Faculty and Staff.*** Cultural awareness for faculty and staff are important to ensure greater sensitivity to the needs, cultures, and aspirations of Aboriginal students. A program is under preparation with Wanuskewin Heritage Park and will be offered in 2003 to faculty and staff, deans, and department heads. For such programs, it is important to ensure that the emphasis is placed on sequential initiatives and not on “one-time” awareness programs. Programs should also be developed to provide an international context, including issues related to indigenous students throughout the world.
5. ***Aboriginal Student Organizations.*** The University should work, where appropriate, to assist Aboriginal student organizations in their efforts to support Aboriginal and indigenous students.

II. Academic Programs

In the *Conceptual Framework for Aboriginal Initiatives*, the University stated as its aim *to distinguish its degree and certificate programs by their breadth and by the inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge in the curriculum.* The University has undertaken an extensive inventory of its current program offerings; it is confident in asserting that it has a strong tradition of leading-edge, innovative, academic degree and certificate programs and a broad base on which to build. Nationally, the University is viewed as a leader in Aboriginal educational programs.

Undergraduate Academic Programming: It is crucial that the University offer a diverse range of undergraduate degrees, in accessible formats, and with careful attention to opportunities to incorporate (according to appropriate protocols) indigenous knowledge into courses and programs. The integration of indigenous understanding and perspectives in undergraduate programs will challenge departments and colleges to review their programs in order to make appropriate modifications. In identifying possible undergraduate degrees and/or certificates for development, the University should work closely with Aboriginal and indigenous communities and organizations.

1. ***The Department of Native Studies.*** The Department of Native Studies has played a crucial role in the presentation of Aboriginal perspectives on campus since its inception in the early 1980s. The Department is currently reviewing its program, with a view to expanding the active involvement of other disciplines in program delivery. These developments should be encouraged and supported.
2. ***Discipline-Based Support Programs for Aboriginal Students.*** Consideration should be given, on a department by department and college by college basis, to the possibility of establishing discipline-based support programs for Aboriginal students. The University

will give initiatives supporting a substantial number of departments and colleges special priority, in its continuing efforts to expand educational opportunities. The University will commit to providing a first-year transition program on a broad base, but it is recognized that Aboriginal students, in all years of their program, should have the opportunity to obtain appropriate support in a timely fashion.

3. ***Aboriginal Content in Curriculum.*** A special academic initiative should be undertaken to provide faculty members with a cultural understanding program related to their field(s) of study and teaching and specifically related to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. The goal would be to assist faculty members in building appropriate Aboriginal content (material related to Aboriginal peoples) into their courses and programs (without marginalizing the Aboriginal contributions or relying on Aboriginal and indigenous students and faculty to provide the content). While this is a complex and difficult process and legitimate concerns about the appropriation of indigenous knowledge by non-community members exist, attention should be given to appreciate Aboriginal ways of learning/knowing/experiencing knowledge, and not to simply adding Aboriginal insights to established classroom delivery models. Colleges and departments should be encouraged to enhance existing programs by providing stronger Aboriginal content, where appropriate, and to developing courses and programs which address the concerns and needs of Aboriginal peoples and communities in Saskatchewan.
4. ***Off-campus and Distance Education Based Course and Program Delivery.*** The University should undertake, with its academic partners, an investigation of on-reserve program and course delivery, with a specific investigation of the suitability of Internet-based course delivery and the development of Internet skills among potential Aboriginal students. As part of a central commitment to working on cultural and academic outreach, the University will develop course and program offerings at Wanuskewin Heritage Park, beginning in 2003-2004.
5. ***Aboriginal and Indigenous Programs with an International Focus.*** The University should develop international study-abroad opportunities with a focus on Aboriginal and indigenous themes and concerns. It should, further, consider cooperative program development and/or exchange agreements with universities with a strong commitment to Aboriginal and indigenous studies.
6. ***Identification and Development of New Academic Programs.*** The University has already started to encourage the development of new programs with a strong Aboriginal focus, such as the Indigenous Peoples and Justice Initiative (IPJI). Other programs, including those which explicitly involve Aboriginal and indigenous knowledge (appropriately and respectfully incorporated) and partnerships with Aboriginal and indigenous communities and organizations, should be considered.
7. ***Recruitment and Retention of Aboriginal and Indigenous Faculty.*** Over the past few years, the University has made a concerted effort to encourage the hiring and retention of Aboriginal and indigenous faculty. This effort should continue, with particular attention emphasis on hiring Aboriginal faculty, including support and encouragement of newly arrived faculty members.

Graduate Academic Programming: It is important that the University provide improved access to existing and new graduate programs and that attention be given to developing new

graduate offerings which respectfully incorporate indigenous knowledge and community experiences into the curriculum. There is a very substantial demand in the province for graduate-qualified individuals, and efforts must be made to ensure that more students are recruited into graduate programs and are supported properly during their time on campus.

1. ***Aboriginal and Indigenous Participation in Graduate Programs.*** The University should encourage Aboriginal and indigenous access to all graduate programs, subject to the attainment of the appropriate level of preparation. The University should encourage colleges to identify Aboriginal and indigenous students with potential for graduate education and should provide opportunities for these students to learn more about educational possibilities beyond the undergraduate level.
2. ***Transition Programs to Graduate School.*** Where appropriate (and potentially on a broad, multi-college level), the University should develop transition initiatives (such as the Native Law Program) to assist Aboriginal and indigenous students in securing entry to graduate school. While such programs may not be required, given the small number of Aboriginal and indigenous students that currently go on to graduate school, it may be appropriate for the University to develop a personal support program for Aboriginal students who are interested in graduate programs.
3. ***Program Development in Graduate Studies.*** Colleges and departments should be encouraged to investigate graduate programs, particularly interdisciplinary initiatives, which focus on Aboriginal and indigenous issues and topics. In this regard, consideration should be given to the re-establishment of Native Studies as an interdisciplinary graduate program. In addition, consideration should be given to the establishment of a discipline-based PhD program. Such programs, tied to an interdisciplinary theme, have proven in other contexts to be an effective means of building critical mass. Where appropriate, at either the Master's or PhD level, the involvement of Aboriginal Elders in thesis defenses should be considered. In addition, the University should investigate possible cooperation with Aboriginal organizations on the development of specialized Masters degrees and should consider cohort-based professional programs which meet identified needs in Aboriginal communities.
4. ***Financial Support for Aboriginal and Indigenous Graduate Students.*** As part of a general program to secure additional support for graduate students, the University should identify sources of funding to support Aboriginal and indigenous graduate students (particularly in light of the mistaken assumption that many have about the ready availability of financial support for First Nations students).

III. Research Programs

In the *Conceptual Framework for Aboriginal Initiatives*, the University stated as its aim *to be a national centre of excellence in research directly related to Aboriginal peoples*. The University has many examples of independent scholars who have developed international reputations in Aboriginal and indigenous theme areas. The University also has recent evidence of its ability to create research partnerships specifically in areas of interest to Aboriginal and indigenous peoples. If the University is to achieve its aim, it will need to identify, with Aboriginal community leaders, a set of institutional level and/or college level research priorities which address problems of mutual interest.

Research with and for Aboriginal Peoples and Communities: It is important to ensure that the research ability and curiosity of University students and faculty are applied, respectfully and appropriately, to the research needs and interests of both Aboriginal peoples and the academy.

1. ***Research Protocols and Appropriate Ethical Guidelines.*** The University needs to ensure that research conducted by its faculty members meets and exceeds accepted guidelines for ethical practice. While much research on topics related to Aboriginal peoples is about Aboriginal communities, not all research is community research. There are often topics about national policy or other wide-ranging phenomenon that require a broad base of information from a number of sources. Where research on Aboriginal communities is undertaken, it is essential that the University establish some guidelines to ensure that its research activities are consistent with the principles enunciated in this document. In particular, the University must give priority to:
 - developing specific research protocols for working with Aboriginal communities that build on existing arrangements, regulations, and systems at the national, regional, and community level.
 - examining the institution's ethical guidelines to ensure that they are appropriate, that they facilitate and support work with Aboriginal communities where such research is conducted.
 - establishing mechanisms for respecting and acknowledging the knowledge and work of Aboriginal Elders.
 - taking pro-active steps to address the ethical issues around the use/appropriation of indigenous knowledge.
2. ***Working with Aboriginal Communities.*** Building on its considerable success in this area, the University should promote and encourage cooperation with Aboriginal communities on the development of collaborative grants and research programs (such as the 'Bridges and Foundations' and Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) initiatives).
3. ***Identifying and Working on Community Research Needs/Priorities.*** At an institutional level, the University of Saskatchewan should establish a mechanism for working with Aboriginal communities to identify research needs and to facilitate the participation of University of Saskatchewan students and faculty in addressing these requirements.
4. ***Developing Research Units/Centres.*** Consideration should be given to the creation of research units designed to encourage and support research with Aboriginal communities.

IV. Cultural Programs

In the *Conceptual Framework for Aboriginal Initiatives*, the University stated as its aim *to have faculty, students, and staff be sensitive to and knowledgeable about the history and culture of Aboriginal peoples and to provide opportunities to understand and celebrate Aboriginal*

language and culture both on campus and in the Aboriginal community. The University has some experience in the development of cultural programs for the general campus community but, if it is to achieve its aim, it will need to develop partnerships with Aboriginal organizations to provide specialized programs. It will further need to identify campus spaces which provide appropriate settings for on-campus delivery of cultural programs.

Aboriginal Cultures: The University of Saskatchewan must consider ways to ensure that the diversity and richness of Aboriginal cultures is properly and respectfully included in the cultural life of the campus. Cultural expression is a vital element in the Aboriginal experience and it is important that the Aboriginal cultures are presented and celebrated on campus.

1. ***Course and Program Enhancements.*** Special encouragement should be given to the expansion of Aboriginal content in existing culture-based academic programs (Art and Art History, Drama, Music, and Literature).
2. ***Partnerships with Aboriginal Organizations/Institutions.*** The University has taken significant steps to formalize a relationship with Wanuskewin Heritage Park and to facilitate the expansion of cultural programming with the Centre (with a strong emphasis on making Wanuskewin more accessible to students). The preliminary arrangements will provide classroom, artistic, and social space at the Park for University of Saskatchewan students.
3. ***Aboriginal Languages.*** Given the centrality of language to Aboriginal cultures, it is imperative that the University carefully consider its plans in this area. Several options are available, including working cooperatively with Saskatchewan Indian Federated College/First Nations University of Canada and with the Gabriel Dumont College and the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan on the provision of Aboriginal language instruction and the development of a Aboriginal language research and training centre (modeled, perhaps, on the Yukon Native Languages Centre).

In addition, the University should work with other Saskatchewan post-secondary institutions (particularly the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College/First Nations University of Canada, Gabriel Dumont College, SIAST, and the University of Regina) on the development of an Aboriginal languages institute, with a goal of enhancing Aboriginal language use in the province.

4. ***On Campus Cultural Presentations.*** The University should encourage Aboriginal cultural groups to perform and present on campus and it should continue to encourage student-centered cultural initiatives, such as the annual Orientation Week Powwow and other such events.

Aboriginal Space(s) on Campus: It is important to ensure that Aboriginal students have an appropriate place or places on campus and that the facilities complement Aboriginal cultural and academic programming. A significant amount of money (close to \$1.2 million) has been set aside for the development of an Aboriginal Students Centre. Meetings are being held now to decide how best to use this funding. The issue of Aboriginal space must be discussed extensively, as there are different visions of how best to involve Aboriginal students in the social life on campus.

1. ***Cultural Spaces for Students.*** Current space(s) for Aboriginal students on campus need to be improved, but, most importantly, Aboriginal students need to have dedicated spaces in a number of buildings (both existing and contemplated) across the campus. These spaces should recognize their various roles as students and parents and should provide a home for spiritual and cultural guidance and support.
 - A small portion of the funding provided to support the development of an Aboriginal Students Centre will be used to improve existing space for Aboriginal students. The remaining money will be used to construct a dedicated space, for Aboriginal students, in a prominent location on campus.
 - As part of its general expansion of student residences on campus, the University should investigate the establishment of a community-owned Aboriginal residence at the University.
 - In planning for the future provision of student support services on campus, the University should secure a central and high-profile space for Elders and advisors.
 - The University will work to establish an Aboriginal daycare on campus, building on the promise of provincial funding for such a facility (as arranged through the Aboriginal Students Centre).
2. ***Cultural Spaces for the General University Community.*** As the University attracts more Aboriginal and indigenous students, it will become increasingly important to ensure that a number of cultural spaces across the campus are provided.
 - The University should ensure that there are appropriate Aboriginal cultural space(s) in future cultural buildings on campus.
 - Consideration should be given to establishing a small number of special classrooms for Aboriginal courses and meetings.
 - As part of its general initiatives to promote culture and art on campus, the University should ensure Aboriginal and indigenous cultural representation in existing buildings and common spaces on campus (such as the display of Aboriginal art in the Administration Building).

V. Community Outreach

In the *Conceptual Framework for Aboriginal Initiatives*, the University stated as its aim *to be more visible, engaged, and knowledgeable about community issues and to participate in locally-based research projects that are immediately relevant to Aboriginal communities*. The University has some experience in community-related initiatives but this is clearly an area of future growth and development.

Community Outreach and Institutional Presence: It is important to ensure that the University of Saskatchewan has an appropriate presence among First Nations and Métis peoples and that the University's researchers, instructors, and service providers are viewed as a supportive and proactive resource for Aboriginal communities.

1. ***A New Approach.*** The University should establish, potentially through the Extension Division, a new approach to community-based research. This approach would focus on empowering University staff members to work with communities on the identification of research needs and with the faculty on the provision of these services.
2. ***Increasing Contact with Aboriginal Communities.*** The University of Saskatchewan should take steps to ensure that faculty and staff members have greater contact with the communities, through orientation visits and community support networks.
3. ***Community High Schools.*** As part of a province-wide commitment to enhancing educational opportunities for Aboriginal students, the University of Saskatchewan should consider establishing an initiative with community high schools to raise the profile of post-secondary education (potentially in partnership with other universities and colleges in the province).
4. ***Specialized Conferences and Workshops.*** The University should sponsor specialized conferences and workshops on issues identified by Aboriginal communities as being of pressing and urgent concern.
5. ***Campus-Community Contacts List.*** Consideration should be given to identifying individuals on campus with an interest-expertise in Aboriginal issues who are willing to serve as a liaison with various Aboriginal groups, communities, and organizations.

Making the University of Saskatchewan Accessible to Aboriginal People: The University of Saskatchewan seeks to become an employer of choice for Aboriginal people. To accomplish this goal, the University will have to examine its procedures and institutional cultures. Enhanced orientation initiatives for all employees will play an important role in encouraging greater Aboriginal participation in the service life of the campus.

1. ***Recruitment of Aboriginal Employees to the University.*** The University should continue its efforts, through the Human Resources Division, to recruit Aboriginal employees to the University.
2. ***Using the Campus as a Showcase.*** In an effort to bridge the existing gap between Aboriginal communities and the University of Saskatchewan, the institution should launch initiatives to invite Aboriginal groups, communities, and organizations to visit the University campus.
3. ***Partnerships with Aboriginal Organizations.*** In building on its recent efforts in this regard, the University should consider partnerships with Aboriginal organizations (FSIN, individual bands, Metis Nation of Saskatchewan, other organizations) which result in more Aboriginal people working on campus on a regular basis.

4. ***Evaluating Current Activities.*** The University should work with existing Aboriginal staff to identify areas of weakness and strength in its current operations and identify mechanisms to improve deficiencies and celebrate accomplishments.
5. ***Building on Strengths.*** The University should ensure that the diverse and rich cultures of the northern plains and parklands are represented on campus.

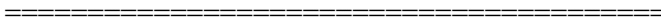
A Provincial Approach to Aboriginal Education: Given the limited government resources available within the province, it is important that the post-secondary system operate effectively in meeting the crucial needs of Aboriginal students and communities in Saskatchewan. The University must work with other institutions to ensure that the various post-secondary institutions in the province do not overlap or engage in unnecessary competition in the development of academic opportunities for Aboriginal students.

1. ***Review of Existing Aboriginal Programs (Provincial).*** In collaboration with other post-secondary educational partners and the Ministry of Learning, the University should indicate its willingness to undertake, a review of existing programs at all institutions. As part of this assessment, the University and its partners should conduct a review of Aboriginal student needs and expectations. It is important, however, that the University not wait until the completion of this review to begin revising and expanding its Aboriginal programs, services, and activities. The University of Saskatchewan should participate centrally with provincial committees established to review the development of Aboriginal post-secondary education in Saskatchewan (which will respect the autonomy and mandates of the participating institutions).
2. ***Liaison with K-12 System and Aboriginal Organizations.*** The University and its post-secondary partners should consider undertaking, through the Ministry of Learning, regular liaison activities with the elementary and high school system and with Aboriginal educational organizations.
3. ***Educational Opportunities (Provincial).*** The University should indicate its willingness to participate in a shared advising and support network, so that students are presented with a comprehensive view of educational opportunities in Saskatchewan.
4. ***National Profile in Outreach.*** Building on its reputation, past successes, and a renewed commitment to Aboriginal students and communities, the University of Saskatchewan should undertake a national initiative to establish the institution as the country's leading site for Aboriginal education and research.
5. ***Educational Opportunities (International).*** In keeping with the University's commitment to global engagement and to ensuring that Saskatchewan issues are understood in an international context, the University should make a consistent effort designed to raise the international profile of the University of Saskatchewan on Aboriginal and indigenous issues.

VI. Next Steps

It is imperative that the University of Saskatchewan make substantial progress on the issues raised in this Foundational Document. It is also vital that the University allocate the necessary human and financial resources to meet this challenge, both through a reallocation of current expenditures and the provision of funds for those initiatives which have the highest priority, as identified through the consultation process associated with the development of *Forging New Relationships*. To these ends, following Council's approval, the following steps should be taken to ensure that the University meets its commitment to respond to the needs of Aboriginal peoples:

1. The Provost will report annually to University Council on the initiatives undertaken related to Aboriginal concerns and needs.
2. A review of existing "soft money" programs and positions will be conducted by the Provost's Office in 2003-04 to see which programs should be transferred to base budget funding. Realignment and reallocations will be synchronized to coincide with decisions related to the outcomes of the college planning process.
3. Beginning in the fall of 2003, a regular forum should be created and co-sponsored by the President's and Provost's Offices for the open discussion of Aboriginal issues related to the University of Saskatchewan.
4. A companion document to this Foundational Document should be prepared for distribution and discussion with Aboriginal peoples, organizations, and communities in Saskatchewan. (This document was prepared with a campus constituency in mind.) Over the next twelve months, the Special Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Initiatives will lead a provincial consultation on the University's plans and will report back to Council on prospects for their realization. As part of this initiative, the Special Advisor will meet with persons currently operating programs aimed at Aboriginal communities in order to protect against duplication of services and to learn from established successes.
5. Specific discussions, led by the Special Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Initiatives, will be held with First Nations post-secondary education counselors and with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) with a view to identifying and developing new approaches to funding to students and to transition programs and other forms of support to ensure student success in University of Saskatchewan programs.
6. A communications strategy should be developed around Aboriginal issues on campus. Steps should be taken to provide for the education of the University community to the issues at hand and to protect against the potential backlash created by the perception that Aboriginal students and employees are being supported in an inappropriate manner.



This Foundational Document on Aboriginal Initiatives identifies a comprehensive and ambitious program in the areas of Aboriginal and indigenous education, research, student affairs, cultural programs, and community outreach. Given known and anticipated resources, it is unlikely that the University of Saskatchewan will be able to move forward on all fronts

simultaneously. As a result, it is vital that institutional consultations and discussions with Aboriginal groups throughout the province identify specific priorities and initiatives from the long list of opportunities. It is vital, further, that colleges, departments, and administrative units review their activities and programs in light of the ideas and suggestions outlined herein. While the University of Saskatchewan cannot do everything at once, **it is also inconceivable that the University will not do anything new or additional in the coming years.** It is imperative that the University of Saskatchewan build on its accomplishments, and capitalize on the support and encouragement provided by the Aboriginal peoples and communities of the Province of Saskatchewan. The needs are great; the opportunities for collaborative, mutually respectful, cooperation are greater still.

The University must recognize, as has University Council, that the vision sketched out in this Foundational Document carries significant financial implications. Even proceeding cautiously will require a significant outlay of money. In the past, programs for Aboriginal students and communities have generally been funded on “soft money.” The University must, increasingly, be prepared to make permanent, base-budget, commitments to Aboriginal initiatives, thus ensuring them the level of stability available to most other initiatives on campus. Most of the resources required to address Aboriginal needs and aspirations will be identified in college and major administrative unit plans. There must be a clear understanding on one point, however: if the University is serious about this issue – and there is every evidence that the University community is truly committed – significant resources must be allocated to Aboriginal programming and services.

At this point, this Foundational Document reflects the views, experiences, and input of the University of Saskatchewan community. It draws on existing programs, stalled dreams, and visions of how this University might be transformed by a new approach to meeting the needs of Aboriginal and indigenous peoples and communities. It is, and should be, an internal document, designed to organize and reflect the institution’s collective thinking on this important topic.

The completion of this Foundational Document represents only the start of a multi-year process. Through the office of the Special Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Initiatives, the University will take the core ideas and suggestions arising from the on-campus discussions and consultations to Aboriginal communities and organizations throughout the province. The feedback arising from these discussions and conversations will be integrated into the implementation strategy for this Foundational Document and will feature prominently in subsequent revisions. It is vital that the University of Saskatchewan community realize that the discussion of this Foundational Document represents the simple beginnings of a complex, multi-faceted, consultation with Aboriginal peoples which will, over the years, develop into a central feature of University life.

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Appendix One

A CURRENT STATE ANALYSIS OF ABORIGINAL INITIATIVES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

[A Work in Progress]

As of October, 2003

Introduction

To measure the University of Saskatchewan's future progress in the important area of Aboriginal education, it is helpful to establish a baseline set of data for comparison both internally and externally (with other universities). Because Canadian universities do not have a tradition of collecting this type of information, the challenge associated with obtaining this information was substantial. Further, it would be fair to say that neither the University of Saskatchewan, nor the peer institutions used in this study⁵, have reliable and accurate information for the indicators examined in this Appendix, nor is there an expectation that reliable data sources will be developed in the near future. Even the Census Data produced by Statistics Canada warns that due to under-coverage, the data on Aboriginal peoples is likely less accurate than that on the non-Aboriginal population. However, given the importance of Aboriginal educational programs to the University of Saskatchewan and its remarkable track record to date in the delivery of these programs, the development of a 'current state analysis' of Aboriginal initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan and, where possible, a comparison of similar initiatives at other comparable universities, was deemed an essential element of the development of *Forging New Relationships: The Foundational Document on Aboriginal Initiatives*.

We provide below the information that is currently available in the hope that this will be of some interest to readers of *Forging New Relationships* and that it will help to illuminate some of the points made in the Foundational Document. Some of the information provided is based on specific research conducted for completion of this 'current state analysis'. Some information was provided by the Provost's Office during the development of the *Conceptual Framework for Aboriginal Initiatives*. Some of the information is anecdotal; some of the information is based on research and information which may or may not be generally available to the University community.

Some Definitions

At the outset, it is essential to ensure that all readers have a similar understanding of the populations and governing bodies described in *Forging New Relationships*. We provide below some basic definitions.⁶

⁵ Peer institutions: University of British Columbia, University of Northern British Columbia, University of Manitoba, University of Northern Arizona, University of Regina, University of Alberta, University of Waikato, New Zealand, and Lakehead University. These are institutions that were identified through research as they each focused on a unique aspect of the Aboriginal student experience.

⁶ Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development: http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/info/info101_e.html

Aboriginal peoples: The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America are described as Aboriginal people. The Canadian Constitution, through the *Constitution Act* (1982) specifies that Aboriginal people in Canada consist of three groups: Indian, Métis, and Inuit. These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

Indian: A term that describes all the Aboriginal people in Canada who are not Inuit or Métis. These people are usually identified in one of three ways:

- **Status Indian:** An Indian person who is registered under the Indian Act. The Act sets out the requirements for determining who is a Status Indian.
- **Non-Status Indian:** An Indian person who is not registered as an Indian under the Indian Act. This may be because his or her ancestors were never registered, or because he or she lost Indian status under former provisions of the Indian Act.⁷
- **Treaty Indian:** A Status Indian who belongs to a First Nation that signed a treaty with the Crown.

Métis: People of mixed and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis people, as distinct from First Nations people, Inuit, or non-Aboriginal people. The Métis have a unique culture that draws on their diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, French, Ojibway and Cree.

Inuit: An Aboriginal people in northern Canada, who live above the tree line in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Northern Quebec, and Labrador. The word means “people” in the Inuit language — Inuktitut. The singular of Inuit is Inuk.

Indigenous peoples: The term “indigenous” usually refers to the original inhabitants of any region of the world, including the Aboriginal people of Canada. It is not normally used to identify a specific band or tribe of original inhabitants; rather, it represents the collective original inhabitants of world regions. *Forging New Relationships* has attempted to be inclusive wherever possible but also keeping in mind the special responsibilities of a university in the western plains region towards Aboriginal peoples residing in Canada.

There are some additional definitions that are helpful in understanding the categories identified above:

First Nation: A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word "Indian", which many people found inappropriate. Although the term First Nation is widely used, no legal definition of it exists. Among its uses, the term "First Nations peoples" refers to the Indian people in Canada, both Status and Non-Status. Many Indian people have also adopted the term “First Nation” to replace the word "band" in the name of their community.

Band: A legal term that recognizes First Nation interest in the land. It is based on their longstanding use and occupancy of the land as descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada.

⁷ *Bill C-31* (1985) eliminated certain discriminatory provisions of the *Indian Act*, including the section that resulted in Indian women losing their Indian status when they married non-Indian men. *Bill C-31* enabled Indian people to apply to have their Indian status restored.

Tribal Council: A regional group of First Nations members that delivers common services to a group of First Nations.

Finally, it is important to clarify or provide a working definition of the term ‘indigenous knowledge’ as used in *Forging New Relationships*. Throughout this Foundational Document, ‘indigenous knowledge’ refers to the collective body of knowledge accumulated and passed down from one generation to the next within Aboriginal and indigenous communities.

The remainder of this Appendix follows the outline provided by the Foundational Document and provides, where available, information on the each major section.

I. Student Affairs

Aboriginal Students at the University of Saskatchewan: One of the greatest current changes in Saskatchewan’s demographics is the growing Aboriginal population. While the general population of Saskatchewan is expected to decline, the Aboriginal population is projected to grow steadily. According to the 2001 Census, Saskatchewan had one of the highest shares of the total national Aboriginal population at 14%. What makes this statistic even more impressive is that 25% of the children in Saskatchewan are Aboriginal. As these children move through the K-12 system, they will account for an increasing portion of the growth of the post-secondary education population.⁸ Suggested readings on this topic include:

- *Saskatchewan and Aboriginal Peoples in the 21st Century: Social, Economic and Political Changes and Challenges*. Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, PrintWest Publishing Services, Regina, 1997.
- Statistics Canada:
<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/analytic/companion/abor/canada>.
- *The Post-Secondary Sector Aboriginal Education and Training Action Plan*. Government of Saskatchewan, Department of Learning (2002).

In 2002-03, the University of Saskatchewan began collecting data centrally on the Aboriginal ancestry of its students. This first effort concluded that a total of 1,331 **self-identified** Aboriginal students were studying at the University of Saskatchewan. This constitutes approximately 7.3% of the entire student body.⁹

Table One: 2002W Participation by College of Self-Identified Aboriginal Students at the University of Saskatchewan

College		College	
Agriculture	20 (1.5%)	Medicine	3 (0.2%)
Arts and Science	540 (40.6%)	Nursing	44 (3.3%)
Commerce	113 (8.5%)	Kinesiology	16 (1.2%)
Dentistry	7 (0.5%)	Pharmacy & Nutrition	11 (0.8%)
Education	247 (18.6%)	Physical Therapy	4 (0.3%)
Engineering	54 (4.1%)	Unclassified Studies	218 (16.4%)
Graduate Studies	22 (1.7%)	Veterinary Medicine	8 (0.6%)
Law	21 (1.6%)	School of Agriculture	3 (0.2%)

⁸ Census Canada, 2001. Statistics Canada, March 2003

⁹ Office of Institutional Analysis, 2003

TOTAL **1,331**

These figures most likely under-estimate the actual numbers of Aboriginal students studying at the University. Anecdotal evidence from colleges which encourage their students to self-identify indicates that a higher enrollment is present than what is indicated in these figures. For example, the College of Law indicates that 13% of its students are Aboriginal based on self-identification to the College. The College of Nursing, which offers the BSN in collaboration with SIAST and SIFC, indicates that a total of 90 students are of Aboriginal ancestry.¹⁰ Of greater concern, perhaps, is that over 16% of the self-identified Aboriginal students are “unclassified”, i.e., they are not registered in a specific program of study. This group may also represent (until recent changes in policy have discontinued this option) a portion of the number of Aboriginal students who were required to discontinue from one college but who were eligible to continue to take University of Saskatchewan classes provided they were registered in “unclassified studies”. This group may also represent students who have not yet determined whether the University of Saskatchewan is a real educational choice or it may represent those students who wish to take one or two courses only without a particular degree program in mind.

One thing is very clear from the information revealed through the self-identification process: Aboriginal students will need to see the direct benefits associated with self-identification if these numbers are to reflect more accurately the current participation levels. It will also be important for the University not to be discouraged from special efforts directly aimed at supporting Aboriginal students if the number of self-identified Aboriginal students does not increase substantially over the period of the planning cycle.

The proportion of Aboriginal students in each college as a percentage of the total headcount enrolment in each college in Winter 2002 is depicted in Table Two. Again, of note is the proportion of Aboriginal students engaged in unclassified studies. This number is worrisome given what we know about the support needs of many Aboriginal students. Also of note is the proportion of Aboriginal students currently enrolled in graduate programs. This number should grow as Aboriginal students complete undergraduate degree programs and look to alternative credentials in academe or elsewhere.

Table Two: 2002W Proportion of Self-Identified Aboriginal Students at the University of Saskatchewan as a Percentage of the Total Headcount Enrolment by College

College		College	
Agriculture ¹¹	23 of 676 (3.4%)	Law	21 of 317 (6.6%)
Arts and Science	540 of 7281 (7.4%)	Medicine ¹²	7 of 316 (2.2%)
Commerce	113 of 1620 (6.9%)	Nursing	44 of 636 (6.9%)
Dentistry	7 of 126 (5.5%)	Pharmacy & Nutrition	11 of 416 (2.6%)
Education	247 of 1146 (21.5%)	Unclassified Studies	218 of 2017 (10.8%)
Engineering	54 of 1317 (4.1%)	Veterinary Medicine	8 of 282 (2.8%)
Graduate Studies	22 of 1744 (1.3%)		
Kinesiology	16 of 465 (3.4%)	TOTAL	1,331 of 18,089 (7.3%)

¹⁰ The discrepancy arises because figures from the College of Nursing include all students registered in the four years of the Nursing Education Program of Saskatchewan (NEPS). The University has taken the position that only those students in the third and fourth year of the program should be counted as University of Saskatchewan students since the first two years of this program are taken at SIAST or SIFC (beginning in September 2003).

¹¹ Includes the School of Agriculture

¹² Includes the School of Physical Therapy

Demographic information indicates that 65% or 867 of the 1,331 self-identified students are female; 35% or 464 are male. The vast majority of the Aboriginal students studying on campus are Saskatchewan residents: 97% or 1,302. Of these, 682 or 52% are of Indian ancestry; 603 or 46% are of Métis ancestry.

Retention Difficulties Experienced by the University of Saskatchewan: Although the University has developed a national reputation for innovative support programs in selected areas (the Program of Legal Studies for Native Peoples, the Teacher Education Programs, the Native Access Program to Nursing) and these programs have been in existence for many years, the University has experienced difficulty in retaining Aboriginal students through to the completion of their degrees in many key programs. In 1998-99, 43.9% of all first-year Aboriginal students in the College of Arts and Science either withdrew or were required to discontinue, compared to the non-Aboriginal average of 20%. This number decreased for upper year Aboriginal students, but remained relatively high compared to other students, at 22.16%.¹³ These figures are particularly worrisome because Arts and Science is viewed by some as an entry point into the health science and other professions.

Retention difficulties are not the case for all programs. For those programs which have developed specialized support for Aboriginal students, retention rates are dramatically different. For example, the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) boasts of retention rates ranging from 80 percent to 88 percent in the last five years. Individual support and a welcoming environment are credited for the successes of their students.¹⁴ The Program of Legal Studies for Native Peoples (PLSNP) has a high success rate in its current format – about 85% of the students it recommends for admission to law school successfully complete their law degrees. The PLSNP has been instrumental in increasing the number of Aboriginal law graduates in Canada from about 5 in 1983 to over 800 today. About 75% of Canada's Aboriginal law graduates attended the PLSNP.

In a recent study, Professor Eric Howe, Department of Economics, pointed out that persistence of Aboriginal students in post-secondary educational programs was highly advantageous. Professor Howe's seminar, delivered at the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, pointed out that Canada's Aboriginal people have the highest average dollar return on their investment in education. He estimated that if an Aboriginal person attends – although not necessarily completes – a program at a university, their lifetime earnings will be \$1,386,434 for a Saskatchewan Aboriginal Male and \$1,249,246 for a Saskatchewan Aboriginal Female.¹⁵

Recruitment of Aboriginal Students: With Aboriginal peoples comprising a significant proportion of the province's population, it is vital to the province, to the University, and to Aboriginal communities that Aboriginal student enrolment continue to rise. A host of recruitment strategies are occurring at the University of Saskatchewan. Many of these strategies are partnerships with Aboriginal organizations, such as the Tribal Councils or individual bands. Some of these activities are sponsored centrally, while other efforts are college-specific. Some of these strategies include:

¹³ College of Arts and Science, Aboriginal Student Advisor's Office (1999).

¹⁴ ITEP Annual Report, 2001/02.

¹⁵ E. Howe, *Education and Life Time Income for Aboriginal People in Saskatchewan*, September 2002, unpublished paper presented at the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives.

Super Saturday: For two days a month during the fall and winter, and for 5-day sessions during the summer, this program aims to provide interesting and unique educational activities for First Nations youth. This program attempts to incorporate traditional knowledge with modern technology and teachings; it focuses on the sciences, fine arts, mathematics, engineering, and health/wellness. It is a collaborative program with the Saskatoon Tribal Council.

Cameco Access Program for Engineering and Sciences (CAPES): The objective of this program is to enhance science and mathematics education in Northern Saskatchewan and to increase the number of students from Saskatchewan's north and other remote areas to pursue engineering and science studies at the University.

Aboriginal Business Program: This program is responsible for recruiting students to the College of Commerce's programs, counseling students during their programs, liaising with Aboriginal leaders and Aboriginal businesses, and developing additional Aboriginal business programs.

For a more comprehensive listing of the programs and initiatives provided by the University of Saskatchewan, please see www.usask.ca/vpacademic/programs/aboriginal/initiatives.shtml.

Financial Assistance for Aboriginal Students: Students who belong to a First Nation are eligible for funding through the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) through band funding. However, contrary to popular belief, band funding does not cover all the costs associated with a post-secondary education, nor do all Aboriginal students qualify for and receive this type of funding. Of the 1,331 self-declared Aboriginal students studying at the University of Saskatchewan in 2002-03, only 700 (or just over 52%) were eligible for this type of funding because of their Aboriginal status (i.e., Status Indian). In the previous year, only 572 eligible students received band funding.

For non-status Indians or Métis students, funding post-secondary education studies is even more problematic. With the exception of students in the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP), there currently are no government supported programs which provide funding to Métis students. The Métis Employment and Training of Saskatchewan (METSI) was able to fund Métis students pursuing a post-secondary degree up until last year when funding from the Aboriginal section of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) stopped because of a change in mandate.

Scholarships and bursaries are important and essential as a way of making post-secondary education both accessible and affordable to Aboriginal students. Currently, the University of Saskatchewan offers 20 awards (16 scholarships and 4 bursaries) specifically for students of Aboriginal ancestry. Four scholarships are available for Aboriginal students entering the University for the first time; eight scholarships and 2 bursaries are available for Aboriginal students who have completed at least one year of study at the University. In addition, four scholarships and two bursaries are open to entering or continuing students. An additional five awards are available that are open to Aboriginal students studying throughout Canada. The values of these scholarships and bursaries vary from \$500 to \$20,000 (for 4 years).¹⁶ Given the gap between the number of Aboriginal students who are eligible for funding from DIAND and the number attending the University, a greater effort will need to be placed on the creation of scholarships and bursaries for Aboriginal students. The current capital campaign, "Thinking

¹⁶ Student and Enrollment Services Division, Student Financial Assistance and Awards website

the World of Our Future”, identifies scholarships and bursaries as a major priority; many colleges have indicated that financial aid for Aboriginal students is a top priority.

Preparation and Transition Programs: These programs are especially important for Aboriginal students because many face both academic and cultural changes as first-year students. Transition programs offer a host of services, including academic preparation, campus orientation, and mentoring. While a number of colleges offer transition programs for first-year students, a university-wide, centrally-offered program offering academic and cultural support to Aboriginal students will not be offered until September 2003 as a pilot program. The First-Year Transition Program for Aboriginal Students will begin with a two week session in late August where the focus will be on a series of skill acquisitions in writing, mathematics, science, and other areas. During the regular Fall term, students will choose from a broad range of courses in a host of disciplines, with special sections (or portions of sections) restricted to Aboriginal students. The First-Year Transition Program will include orientation sessions, cultural activities, and peer support groups. A detailed description of this program can be found at the end of this Appendix.

Preparation and Transition Programs were an integral component of the May and June 2002 Workshops which highlighted both on-campus programs and best practices from other universities. The June 2002 Workshop, ‘Practical Strategies for Student Support’, brought in representatives from Arizona State University, the University of Arizona, the University College of Cape Breton, and the University of Manitoba, to describe initiatives and activities that have been successful in attracting and retaining Aboriginal students at these universities. The details of the Workshop, including results and participant comments, are available at www.usask.ca/university_council/planning/subcommittee_aboriginal_2002-03.shtml. The Workshop provided a pointed demonstration that the University of Saskatchewan has many initiatives for Aboriginal students which, if drawn together into a cohesive whole, would be the envy of many other universities in Canada, the United States, and elsewhere.

Support Services: Support services for Aboriginal students vary widely, and should not be narrowly defined. Some programs, such as the Assessment Program at Northern Arizona University, assess academic and personal needs, learning styles, study skills, and habits to provide customized support. Other support activities include sponsoring Aboriginal musical talent, such as the George Leach concert recently held at Louis’ Pub at the University of Saskatchewan. In all cases, the mandate of support services remains the same: to provide support to Aboriginal students with the goal of increasing recruitment, retention, and academic success.

The University of Saskatchewan offers many support programs to Aboriginal students, many of which are similar to those found at other universities. A current listing of these programs can be viewed at www.usask.ca/vpacademic/programs/aboriginal/initiatives.shtml. Two of these programs are highlighted in this section.

Aboriginal Students Centre (ASC). The ASC was established in 1991 by the University in response to the growing Aboriginal student population on campus. The Centre’s mandate is to present the University as a top choice educational institution for Aboriginal students as well as ensuring that the University remains sensitive and responsive to student needs. Support services include: personal advising and referral; community liaison; orientation for new students; student advocacy; student handbook; ASC Newsletter; and campus tours.

Elders Service. One of the best supports the ASC offers to Aboriginal students is access to culturally appropriate counseling. Elders are available on a drop-in basis to provide spiritual guidance for students, staff, and faculty. These services include traditional seasonal feasts, weekly sweats, Moon ceremonies, and traditional prayers for the sick. The ASC does not currently offer an Elder-in-residence program as is available at other universities (e.g., University of Manitoba). However, this program hosts both a male and female Elder, which alleviates gender issues students may have.

II. Academic Programs

The University of Saskatchewan offers one of the largest arrays of specialized programs for Aboriginal students and programs with an Aboriginal focus for all students in Canada. A comprehensive listing of the program offerings, academic and support, was compiled by the Provost's Office in 2001/02 and can be viewed at www.usask.ca/vpacademic/programs/aboriginal.shtml. Some highlights include:

Academic Programs for Aboriginal students

- Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) for status Aboriginal students
- Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) for Métis and Non-status Aboriginal students
- Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP) for northern residents including Aboriginal students
- Aboriginal Justice and Criminology Program (ABJAC), for all Aboriginal students
- Certificate in Indigenous Business Administration (CIBA), for all Aboriginal students
- Aboriginal Business Education Programs - MBA specialization in Indigenous Management, open to all students
- Saskatchewan Institute for Language and Literacy, a summer program offered jointly with the University of Alberta

Academic Programs with an Aboriginal Focus

- Department of Native Studies (BA, MA and PhD (special case))
- Indian and Northern Education Program (INEP)
- Specializations in English and Education
- Courses in a variety of disciplines in Arts and Science, particularly in the Humanities, Fine Arts and Social Sciences Divisions
- Indigenous Peoples and Justice Initiative (IPJI) – BA in Indigenous Public Administration

Access Programs

- Native Access Program to Nursing
- Program of Legal Studies for Native People
- Cameco Access Program for Engineering and Science (CAPES) in Engineering

In addition, many colleges reserve spaces for qualified students of Aboriginal ancestry. Certain colleges have been more successful than others in attracting Aboriginal students. Education, Arts, and Law have traditionally had a higher proportion of Aboriginal students than the Physical and Natural Sciences, Health Sciences, and Graduate Studies.

A review of initiatives at peer universities indicates that they are addressing the under-representation of Aboriginal students in the Physical and Natural Sciences, Health Sciences, and Graduate Studies with special Aboriginal Support Programs with a discipline-specific focus. Of note is the Access Program at the University of Manitoba. There, access counselors and academic advisors provide practical, personalized, help to students based upon their individual academic and personal needs. Sponsorship includes academic and personal support; it may also include some financial assistance. Access programs at the University of Manitoba focus on Nursing, Engineering, Health Sciences, Pre-medicine, and students working towards their first degree in any area of study. Currently, the Medicine program at the University of Manitoba has 20 Aboriginal students enrolled, compared to three at the University of Saskatchewan.

A survey of Aboriginal-focused programs at other universities in Western Canada revealed the information contained in Table Three.

Table Three: A Selection of Academic and Student Support Programs with an Aboriginal Focus at Western Canadian Universities

University	Academic Programs/Schools
University of British Columbia	First Nations and Commerce Native Indian Teacher Education Ts'kei Graduate Studies First Nations Forestry First Nations Health Careers First Nations Legal Studies
University of Northern British Columbia	First Nations Studies Certificates in: Aboriginal Community Resource Planning; First Nations Language; General First Nations Studies; Métis Studies; Traditional Environmental Knowledge; First Nations Public Administration Transition Year, Northern Advancement Program
University of Alberta	School of Native Studies BA Native Studies after degree BA NS/BEEd Combined BA Native Studies Indigenous Law Program First Nations Education MA, PhD Native Health Care Career program - MD Bachelor of Commerce Program
University of Regina	BEEd Elementary (Indian Education) BEEd Elementary After Degree (Indian Education) BA Fine Arts Bachelor of Indian Social Work Certificates in: Indian Communication Arts; Indian Health Studies; Indian Social Work; First Nations Banking Administration
University of Manitoba	BA; MA; MSc in Native Studies Aboriginal Business Education Program

Access programs
Aboriginal Focus Program

III. Research Programs

The University has been awarded many major research grants for studies with an Aboriginal focus. One grant, awarded in 2001, entitled 'Bridges and Foundations', supports a project which seeks better understanding of the gap between available housing options and community amenities and what is needed to meet the needs and expectations of the Aboriginal community in Saskatoon. Another major grant awarded in 2002 helped establish the Indigenous Peoples' Health Research Centre (IPHRC). This joint Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC)¹⁷, University of Regina, and University of Saskatchewan project will carry out research in health issues related to indigenous peoples and increase opportunities for people of indigenous ancestry to pursue health-related research and training.

The Northern Ecosystems Toxicology Initiative (NETI), one of four initiatives selected as part of the Priority Determination Process, has a major emphasis on toxicological research of the water and ecosystems of Northern Saskatchewan. One of the major components of this initiative is the development of collaborative relationships with Aboriginal peoples to identify methods of dealing with health and ecological issues resulting from toxic environments.

The Native Law Centre's research directors – Brian Slattery and Kent McNeil (both now of Osgoode Law School) and Sakej Youngblood Henderson (current Director) – have ensured that the Centre is at the forefront of legal research, knowledge and creativity in Aboriginal issues. The Centre has been a commanding presence in the decisions and reasoning of courts of appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada and has been reflected in the courts' citations of their work on Aboriginal issues. The Centre's award winning publication program continues to publish its centerpiece *Canadian Native Law Reporter* as well as important Aboriginal law monographs, the *Justice as Healing* newsletter, and joint publications with bodies such as the Indian Taxation Advisory Board and the Métis Settlements Appeal Tribunal of Alberta.

The University of Saskatchewan has been awarded two Canada Research Chairs, one in Native Newcomer Relations and the other in Identity and Diversity: the Aboriginal Experience. These prestigious awards provide significant opportunities for established and emerging scholars to address Aboriginal issues and to build research pre-eminence in this area for the University.

IV. Cultural Programs

Aboriginal Culture on Campus: Integral to the success of a student is a sense of belonging. For Aboriginal students, this is ensuring that the diversity and richness of their culture is properly and respectfully included in the cultural life of the campus. Currently, Aboriginal culture is seen in pockets on this campus: yearly sponsored Powwows and other cultural events; Aboriginal art displayed in certain buildings; and increases in Aboriginal content in many

¹⁷ The SIFC has recently indicated that it will be changing its name to the First Nations University of Canada.

academic courses. But more can be done. Other universities have put into practice initiatives to help promote Aboriginal culture on campus:

- In 2001, Lakehead University installed bilingual (English and Oji-Cree) signs in an attempt to create a welcoming environment for Aboriginal students who make up 12% of their student body.¹⁸
- The University of Waikato in New Zealand has the highest proportion of Maori students on any campus in New Zealand and is committed to creating an appropriate cultural environment for its students. One example of this is the bilingual nature of the campus. Buildings, programs, and the website, to name a few, are available both in English and Maori.

Cultural Awareness for Faculty and Staff: Cultural awareness for faculty and staff is important to ensure greater sensitivity to the needs, cultures and aspirations of Aboriginal students. A few initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan are attempting to address this issue, the most prominent of which is the new partnership with Wanuskewin Heritage Park. In April 2002, the University signed a *Memorandum of Agreement* with Wanuskewin to work together in partnership to develop joint initiatives in cultural programming, research initiatives, Aboriginal awareness education, and an Elders program. It is the hope of both parties that this agreement will provide opportunities to link the cultural significance of Wanuskewin to the University, thereby enriching educational opportunities for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and staff at the University.

Aboriginal Space(s) on Campus: Unlike several of our peer institutions, the University of Saskatchewan has not yet dedicated an appropriate space or spaces for Aboriginal culture. Centres such as the First Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia, the First Nations Centres at the University of Northern British Columbia and the University of Toronto, provide peaceful, culturally-sensitive, environments where students can learn, study, socialize, and relax. These spaces are usually located with or near the many support services offered to Aboriginal students.

V. Community Outreach

Employment Equity: The University was a signatory to the Aboriginal Partnership Agreement with the Government of Saskatchewan in 1999. This Agreement signifies the University's commitment to work with the Aboriginal community, unions, and employees to identify employment needs and remove barriers to Aboriginal employment in the workplace.

As the University of Saskatchewan strives to become an employer of choice for Aboriginal peoples, the number of self-identified Aboriginal peoples employed at this institution has nearly doubled in the last five years, going from 45 (1.1%) employees in 1998 to 84 (2.1%) in 2002. While this is an accomplishment to be proud of, the demographics of Aboriginal faculty and staff at the University of Saskatchewan continue to be significantly lower than those of the province (14%).

¹⁸ *University Affairs*, December 2001

Outreach Initiatives: The University determined that a coordinated effort was required to support outreach initiatives, particularly those within the Aboriginal community. In January 2003, Mr. George E. Lafond became the first Special Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Initiatives. A major goal of this position is to ensure that the University reaches out to the Aboriginal communities in Saskatchewan and makes a difference in their lives.

The University, through the Indian Teacher Education Program, has provided ‘on reserve’ training to students from the Thunderchild Reserve for the past three years. It is hoped that the University’s presence at this reserve will inspire some talented Aboriginal students to attend the University.

The Indigenous Peoples Program (IPP) in the Extension Division, established in 1988, has achieved recognition for its conferences and workshops, and as a publisher and research unit. IPP works primarily with organizations and institutions to provide educational opportunities improving social and economic conditions for indigenous peoples locally and globally. Some achievements include the innovative program to enhance the skills of talented Aboriginal students who excel in math, science and technology, workshops on conducting respectful research, and community education workshops on treaties, language training, sustainable development, and community issues.

Funding for Aboriginal Programs: *Forging New Relationships* indicates that it will be necessary for the University to allocate the necessary human and financial resources to make substantial progress on the issues raised. Currently \$2,535,300 of activities (University-wide and college-specific) are funded from the base operating budget. For University-wide programs and initiatives, the base budget is approximately equal to funding from other sources, so it appears that Aboriginal programs are disproportionately dependent on funding from other sources.¹⁹ The University has some opportunities, through the Integrated Planning Initiative and through the Capital Campaign to consider alternative funding arrangements for these activities.

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¹⁹ Financial Services Division, 2002.

A First Year Experience Program for Aboriginal Students at the University of Saskatchewan

Prepared by Ken Coates, Acting Provost and Vice-President Academic

As of March, 2003

On-campus discussions over the past year have demonstrated the fundamental importance of a first-year experience program for Aboriginal students entering the University of Saskatchewan. The two workshops co-sponsored by the Provost's Office and the Planning Committee of Council in May and June 2002 provided compelling evidence of the importance of such initiatives and of the variety of models and approaches available to the University. The response to the June 2002 workshop on "practical strategies for student support" reinforced the urgent need to significantly enhance current program offerings and make them generally available to Aboriginal students regardless of their program of choice. Over the course of the 2002/03 academic year, the Provost's Office has held discussions with a number of groups and individuals, both on and off campus, about the best means of proceeding. This document represents our collective approach to the idea of a first-year experience program for Aboriginal students. It highlights the principles which will inform program development and describes, in a preliminary way, the general framework for the program.

Given the demographic imperatives facing our province, including the pressing urgency to ensure that Aboriginal peoples participate fully in the education system at all levels, and given the primary role of the University of Saskatchewan in shaping the professional and educational opportunities for the citizens of the province, it is essential, in our view, that we undertake, at the university level, a first-year experience program open to all Aboriginal students to ensure their success in the post-secondary educational environment. At a minimum, we envision the development and delivery of a pilot program for the 2003-2004 academic year under the sponsorship of the Associate Vice-President Student and Enrolment Services and the Dean of Arts and Science. This pilot program will be based in Arts and Science since that college is the "gateway" to the University's programs, both those based in the college and in the professional colleges. Based on the response to this pilot program, we commit to giving careful consideration to the establishment of a permanent program in this crucial area.

In formulating our proposal, to which we invite comments and suggestions for improvement, we have been governed by a series of key principles:

1. The University is committed to ensuring Aboriginal student success by providing a positive, supportive, academically stimulating, and culturally appropriate first year experience for Aboriginal students.
2. The University is committed to providing the necessary academic support structure to ensure that Aboriginal students succeed in their university studies;
3. The University would like to support first year Aboriginal students without reference to their program of study or intended career;
4. The University recognizes that not all Aboriginal students require remedial assistance, but many seek cultural and personal support. The program should be structured with the diversity of the Aboriginal student population in mind.
5. The University believes that providing cultural and social support is vital to the success of Aboriginal students.

We recognize that implementing the program will require a phased-in approach. Our overall goal is that the program be fully implemented in five years (i.e. by the 2007/2008 academic year) and that we use the next two years to phase in the program, assess its validity, and adjust as appropriate. A main purpose of the first-year program for Aboriginal students will be to foster a sense of community on campus by creating critical mass in selected courses which are required for degrees in the professional colleges or which are pivotal for success in the College of Arts and Science.

The proposed first-year program for Aboriginal students is therefore based on four operating assumptions:

1. The goal is to support students in all undergraduate first year programs and to encourage students to consider all of the academic options on campus.
2. The University of Saskatchewan is committed to maintaining the academic standards of its courses and programs for all students.
3. It is crucial for faculty and support staff involved in the program to take significant steps towards understanding Aboriginal cultures in this region.
4. All Aboriginal students may desire access to a program and to courses that provide specific security and support for Aboriginal peoples.

Program Structure and Content: The first-year experience program for Aboriginal students will function in the following way:

1. The University will hire an Aboriginal Coordinator who will be housed in the Student and Enrolment Services Division or College of Arts and Science (?). The Aboriginal Coordinator will work closely with the Director of the Aboriginal Students Centre and the Academic Coordinator College of Arts and Science, the Associate Vice-President Student and Enrolment Services, the Dean of Arts and Science and the Special Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Initiatives to develop and deliver the program.
2. The program will begin with a two week program in late August, prior to the commencement of classes, which will provide a series of skills acquisitions review tied to courses the students will likely be taking. A ceremonial welcome, followed by intensive sessions in writing, mathematics, science and other skills areas will be arranged during this period.
3. The University will offer a broad range of courses, selected so as to include courses from a wide range of disciplines thereby covering the spectrum of courses required for entry to a variety of academic and professional programs. Initially, it is proposed that a section of the introductory courses, specifically designed for Aboriginal students, would be offered as part of the program: Agriculture, Anatomy and Cell Biology, Biochemistry, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Economics, English, Geography, Health Sciences, Mathematics, Microbiology, Native Studies, Physics, Physiology, Psychology, Sociology, Statistics. Enrollment in these specific sections will be restricted to Aboriginal students. Other courses may emerge in discussions with colleges over the coming weeks.
4. Aboriginal students enrolled in all direct entry colleges will have at least one program course available to them.
5. Individual students will be encouraged to enroll in the courses designated as part of the program, depending on their personal circumstances. Students will be encouraged to limit their enrollment to a maximum of two courses per semester.
6. By enrolling in the program, students commit to attend orientation sessions, to participate in cultural activities, and to work in peer support groups.

7. Instructors will receive special training re: the abilities, needs and challenges of Aboriginal students. They will be expected to teach their courses with attention to the circumstances in which the students operate.
8. By agreeing to teach in the program, faculty members commit themselves to attending orientation sessions, participating in cultural activities, and completing a training session.
9. There will be a day-long orientation for students and faculty members before the commencement of classes. This orientation session will involve elders and community leaders, plus senior representatives from the University.
10. There will be at least monthly cultural and/or social events for student and faculty participants, to be held (where appropriate) in conjunction with University, First Nations and Métis activities in the Saskatoon area.
11. Elders will meet with program participants on a regular basis.
12. Program courses will be expected to meet the same standard as comparable courses on campus; the instructional approach is expected to be modified to suit the needs and circumstances of first year Aboriginal students.
13. Program courses will be coordinated with the services offered by the University's Math Help Centre, Writing Centre, and other support units.

Selection of Faculty Members: The program requires a considerable commitment from regular faculty members at the University. Faculty selection will proceed in the following manner:

1. The program coordinating committee will identify the courses to be offered, based on an assessment of anticipated student interest.
2. A call for participants will be circulated to eligible faculty members in the appropriate disciplines.
3. The program coordinating committee will prepare a statement of the commitment required from each faculty member.
4. The program coordinating committee will select faculty members for the year's courses.
5. Priority will be given to using tenure-stream faculty members in the courses.

Resource Requirements: In the first year of operations, the program will require the following resources:

1. Salary and benefits for the Aboriginal Coordinator -- \$45,000
2. Replacement costs (approximately \$4,000 per course) for ten courses -- \$40,000
3. Elders' fees, transportation, gifts, cultural activities, etc. -- \$2,500
4. Office supplies, recruitment materials, etc. -- \$2,500

Total Budget for First Year -- \$90,000

Implementation strategy:

1. Initial preparation of program draft for discussion with Provost's Committee on Aboriginal Initiatives and March 15 Workshop
2. Following this presentation, we should arrange to spend an afternoon with a small group of Aboriginal elders/leaders to discuss the plan.

3. Revised program developed and delegated to Student and Enrolment Services/Dean of Arts and Science for implementation.
4. Discussion with post-secondary education coordinators, USask recruiters, and others.
5. Aboriginal coordinator for program hired in May 2003; recruitment efforts should begin at that time.

The program will be launched, ceremonially, in early September.

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Forging New Relationships: Plan Development Process

Drafting Committee

Ken Coates, Acting Provost and Vice-President Academic, and Pauline Melis, Director of Institutional Planning, worked collaboratively to produce drafts of the Foundational Document. George E. Lafond, Special Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Initiatives, Paola Chiste, Integrated Planning Office, and Pauline Melis developed Appendix One: the Current State Analysis. Individual and group consultation and feedback provided suggestions for improvement that were incorporated into the Document. The three revisions of the Foundational Document were developed through consultation with the Drafting Committee (see below). Pauline Melis also coordinated and supervised the development process.

Members of the Drafting Committee for the Aboriginal Foundational Document were:

Valerie Arnault, Advisor, Native Access Program to Nursing

Ken Coates, Acting Provost and VP Academic

George E. Lafond, Special Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Initiatives

Kathleen Makela, Director, Aboriginal Students Centre

Pauline Melis, Director of Institutional Planning

John Thompson, St Thomas More College, representing the Planning Committee

Ernie Walker, Department of Archaeology

Candace Wasacase-Lafferty, Aboriginal Employment Coordinator, Human Resources Division

Development Process:

1. *Building on the groundwork laid by the Planning Committee following the approval of A Framework for Planning at the University of Saskatchewan*

In September 1998, a retreat of the Planning Committee was held to discuss how the University could meet its commitment of “responding to the needs of Aboriginal peoples”, the fourth goal identified in *A Framework for Planning*. Over the 1998-99 academic year, the Provost’s Office organized a series of meetings with individuals on campus who were actively engaged in Aboriginal educational issues. It also organized, in collaboration with the Planning Committee, a series of “talking circles” with Aboriginal faculty and staff from across the campus. The Provost’s Office also met with the executives of Aboriginal student organizations and with the Aboriginal Caucus.

2. *Building on the work completed by the Provost’s Office on the development of the Conceptual Framework for Aboriginal Initiatives*

The Provost’s Office, at the request of the President, undertook to develop a conceptual model for Aboriginal initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan. Professors Ernie Walker (Department of Archaeology) and Shauneen Pete-Willett (Educational Foundations) along with Provost and VP Academic Michael Atkinson participated in an exploratory visit to meet with representatives from the University of Arizona and Arizona State University in the Fall of 2000. These discussions provided the impetus to the development of the *Conceptual Framework for Aboriginal Initiatives* which was discussed with the Deans’ Council, the Planning Committee, and the Aboriginal Caucus

in the Spring of 2001. Following these discussions, the *Conceptual Framework* was presented to University Senate (Spring 2001). One major component of the *Conceptual Framework* was the identification of the need to coordinate Aboriginal initiatives on campus; the position of Special Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Initiatives was advertised in the Spring 2002 and Mr. George E. Lafond was appointed to the position effective January 1, 2003.

The Provost's Office sponsored a series of three Workshops in May and June of 2002 and March 2003 to discuss aspects of the University's Aboriginal initiatives. The May 2002 Workshop provided an opportunity for on-campus programs to highlight their successes and activities. The June 2002 Workshop entitled "Practical Strategies for Student Support" included speakers from the University of Arizona, Arizona State University, the University College of Cape Breton, and the University of Manitoba. Its main purpose was to highlight best practices at other universities and to engage a dialogue about potential programs that might be developed at the University of Saskatchewan. It was attended by a broad cross-section of the campus community with representation from all colleges on campus and from students. The Conceptual Framework was presented at the June Workshop to provide an indication of the type and level of activities at the University of Saskatchewan and to provide context on the general aims of the University in this area.

In March 2003, the Provost's Office sponsored a follow-up workshop on Aboriginal Initiatives to discuss the Foundational Document and to report on progress on selected initiatives. The Workshop had over 80 in attendance, many of whom had participated in the original two workshops.

2. Document Preparation

A preliminary draft outline of the Foundational Document on Aboriginal Activities was circulated for initial comments in September. Feedback on this preliminary draft provided input into the preparation of a revised version, dated November, 2002. This version was posted on the University website and discussed at a Town Hall Meeting at Place Riel Theatre on November 15, 2002. This was the single most well-attended Town Hall Meeting in the series presented in the Fall Term and the response from those attending was overwhelmingly positive and highly laudatory.

Feedback on the document from several group discussions, particularly from the committees of Council, produced several suggestions for improvement. These comments formed the basis for revisions and discussions with Deans' Council and with Council committees.

The Provost's Office used the March 2003 Workshop as an opportunity to obtain specific feedback on the Foundational Document. Comments from this Workshop were incorporated into a new version which was posted on the University website on April 24, 2003 for discussion www.usask.ca/vpacademic/integrated-planning/plandocs/foundational_docs.php. Addressed to Deans, Department Heads, the President's Advisory Council, the Planning Committee and the March 15 Workshop participants, a broad cross section of the University community were invited to submit their comments on this draft by May 31, 2003. These comments, principally from the Council committees, were incorporated into the third formal draft (June, 2003). This

version is to be reviewed by the Planning Committee and, if approved, forwarded to Council for Council's consideration and approval.

The development of a Current State Analysis (Appendix One) was an important sub-process that formed part of the preparation of this Foundational Document. With assistance from Paola Chiste, Research Analyst in the Integrated Planning Office, George E. Lafond, Special Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Initiatives, and the ad-hoc Working Group on Current State Analysis, data were assembled on various dimensions of the University's Aboriginal performance. While it is clear that most universities do not collect this information, several were identified as providing aspects which, where appropriate, are included in this Appendix.

3. Formal Approval Process

Council approved a 'process and timelines' document in December 2002 outlining how Council proposed to review and approve the Foundational Documents. It is anticipated that this Foundational Document will be first discussed by Council at its June 2003 meeting and approved at its September 2003 meeting. Comments and suggestions from Council should be incorporated, where appropriate, over the summer months. Once the document is approved by Council it will be posted on the Integrated Planning website (www.usask.ca/vpacademic/integrated-planning/).

The Planning Committee, the committee assigned lead responsibility for this Foundational Document, considered it at its June 9, 2003 meeting and has recommended the document for discussion and approval by Council.

Group Discussions of *Forging New Relationships*:

(a) Open Meetings

Foundational Document Town Hall Meeting, Aboriginal Initiatives, Place Riel Theatre, November 15, 2002 – presentation of the document by Acting Provost & V-P Academic Ken Coates, followed by discussion of the plan. Post-meeting written feedback was received from some participants.

(b) Committees of Council

The Planning Subcommittee for the Aboriginal Goal was designated by the Planning Committee to be the lead committee for its review of this document. The 2002-03 members of this Subcommittee are: John Thompson (chair); Ruth Thompson, Ted Leighton, Bruce Waygood, Blair McDaid (USSU), Deborah Drake (GSA), Pauline Melis (Office of the VP Academic), Eric Howe (Budget Committee), Len Gusthart (Instructional Development Committee), Sam Robinson (Academic Programs Committee), Bill Archibold (Capital Planning Committee), and Cathie Fornssler (secretary).

The Subcommittee discussed the document in September (initial outline draft), December (Town Hall meeting draft) and April (April 15 version). The Budget Committee also reviewed and commented on the outline. To provide opportunity for further comment from Council committees on the revised version, the Subcommittee distributed the April 15 version to all committees. The Academic Programs Committee discussed this draft at its May 7 meeting and provided comments and suggestions to the drafting committee. The Capital Planning Committee also provided comments to the drafting committee.

(c) Other Group Consultations

1. Deans' Council
2. University Senate Fall 2001
3. University Senate Fall 2002

(d) Related Workshops and Meetings:

May 15-16, 2002: Workshop 1: Responding to the Needs of Aboriginal Peoples: Presentations of Campus Aboriginal Initiatives

June 19-21, 2002 Workshop 2: Responding to the Needs of Aboriginal Peoples: A Workshop on Practical Strategies for Student Support

March 15, 2003: Workshop 3: Responding to the Needs of Aboriginal Peoples: Aboriginal Initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan: Progress and Priorities. Discussion of "A First-Year Experience Program for Aboriginal Students at the University of Saskatchewan" and the second draft of the foundational document, now called "Forging New Relationships: The Foundational Document on Aboriginal Initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan,"

Attending and participating in these workshops were Aboriginal faculty members from Arts and Science, Education, Commerce, Law, and Graduate Studies, and staff from Aboriginal student support programs across campus. These programs include the Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs (ATEP) in Education (Orest Murawsky), Native Access Program in Nursing (Val Arnault), Legal Studies for Native People program in Law (Ruth Thompson), northern mathematics and science access programs in Arts and Science (David Cowan, formerly with CAPES program), Commerce Aboriginal Business programs (Warren Weir and Angela Bellegarde), Aboriginal Student's Centre and student services advising program (Kathleen Makela), Arts and Science programs for Aboriginal student advising and support (Charlotte Ross).

Also in attendance at the second of these workshops were representatives from the University of Arizona, Arizona State University, the University College of Cape Breton, and the University of Manitoba.

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